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The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
KATHLEEN BLISS

11*th July*, 1945

DEAR MEMBER,

There has been during the war years a greatly increased knowledge and understanding of the Churches in Europe by the Churches in this country, the Dominions and the United States. The part played by the continental Churches in resistance to Nazi domination has been "news" in the Fleet Street sense. Their future will be less exciting, but no less arduous as they struggle to make good the destruction of war and to meet the moral and spiritual needs of their people in times of change and difficulty. They will look to us for practical help and closer association.

THE CHURCHES IN EUROPE

During the war the Ministry of Information has supplied a regular service of church news, both domestic and foreign, through its publication *Spiritual Issues of the War* and its Catholic and Orthodox bulletins. Much of the foreign news came from sources not available to private publications in war time. The total circulation was over 20,000, of which half was in the United States. The continuance of a government service of church news in peace time would, even if practicable, raise doubts in many minds; but the demise of these bulletins brings home to us the fact that in this country we have no bulletin giving news of all Churches in all countries, and reprinting the more important Christian documents and utterances. The News-Letter will continue to give news of the Churches abroad, more particularly of their relations with the secular spheres of life.

Our interest in the churches in Europe is now centred upon what we can do for their rehabilitation. In this country, the committee for Christian Reconstruction in Europe, under the auspices of the British Council of Churches, reports that the collections taken on VE day amount to over £30,000. At Geneva the work of assessing needs on the Continent is going forward. Returning from America last month, Dr. Visser 't Hooft reported that the enthusiasm with which the churches there have embarked on the task of awakening interest and raising funds is boundless. When Dr. Warnshuis visited Europe last winter as the envoy of the American churches, his mission was considered by the United States government sufficiently important for him to be granted diplomatic privileges.

His report [1] on the situation in the Churches of Europe has been widely circulated throughout the United States.

NEWS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Dr. Hnik, who for five years had been attached to the government of Dr. Benes in this country, and was the secretary of the Anglo-Czechoslovak Christian Fellowship, left London in March to return to Czechoslovakia. He is now in England again on a brief visit. Dr. Hnik travelled via Constantinople through Russian-occupied Rumania and Hungary. His first contacts with the Church were in Slovakia, where the two Lutheran bishops and twenty-five pastors have been released from prison and are again at work in their parishes.

In Prague, he reports, the situation is full of hope and expectancy. The university has been closed since November, 1939, and every profession, including the Christian ministry, has been depleted in consequence. Many of the students spent three or more years in concentration camps, and only those with the toughest physical and moral fibre have survived to return and complete their studies. Many, particularly Communists and close associates of Dr. Benes, died or were killed in the camps.

The Minister of Education, who is also Minister for Church Affairs, is a Communist. He is author of a widely-read life of Smetana and the leading authority on Hussite hymnology. He has made it known that he hopes to see the Churches, both Catholic and Evangelical, play a great part in national reconstruction. Shutting the Church up to exclusive preoccupation with spiritual affairs, he says, creates clericalism, and leads to disaster. A chair of Christian social ethics is to be founded in Prague University, and Dr. Hnik while in England is making an urgent search for books for a library of Christian social ethics.

Dr. Hnik reports that towards Russia the feeling of the people is one of profound gratitude. Russia has redeemed them from a long dark night, and they look to her to act as the father of a family of nations in Eastern Europe. Not for many years will the fear of Germany be forgotten. The plans disclosed by Hermann Frank, when he openly admitted at his trial that the populations of Bohemia and Moravia were to be deported to Russia to make room for Germans, brought home to the people the narrowness of their escape from a terrible fate. The Sudetan German question exercises all minds. Those who accepted German citizenship from Hitler are now no longer citizens of Czechoslovakia. Those who did not accept German citizenship or engage in anti-Czech activities are to be granted a right to option.

[1] *The Church's Struggle for Europe's Soul.* American Committee for the World Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10.

The food situation is acute, but since the country is almost self-supporting there is hope of speedy recovery. Meanwhile, the discomfort of life does not appear to have decreased the enthusiasm of the people for their new-found freedom.

THE PATRIARCHAL DELEGATION TO BRITAIN

The three representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church who came on a visit of friendship last month have returned. Why did they come and what did they achieve? The three delegates addressed a number of meetings, including the Senate of London University. They made a profound personal impression. The Metropolitan Nicholas Krutitsky is a commanding figure, and he spoke movingly of the need for Christian brotherhood between the Russian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Churches of the East and the Churches of the West. Of the events in Russia between 1917 and 1940 not a word was said, nor were there any political references.

The delegates spoke of the mounting popularity of the Church, the return of traditional forms of worship, and of the custom of Christian marriage even among Red Army officers. They asked eagerly about theological developments in this country. It was clear that their reading of Russian theology and devotional literature had been wide and profound. They emphasized their great need for theologians to staff their colleges.

These delegates are the first visitors from Russia since the Revolution who have been allowed to enter into personal contact with Russian *émigrés* in this country. This is a fact of great significance.

Nothing can be more welcome than that as many Russians as possible should come to see and know for themselves church life and church leaders in this country and America. It is our plain duty to encourage by all means in our power the process of growing mutual understanding. We can work for this with sincerity and enthusiasm without committing ourselves to any view about the motives behind the attitude of the Soviet Government to the Church. Nor need we suppose that increasing understanding between individuals or Churches disposes of the far-reaching issues between the democratic way of life and the Russian power state.

CHRISTIANS IN GERMANY

A considerable measure of freedom is allowed to the Churches in the British occupied zone of Germany. Services are being held; sermons are preached; church organizations are continuing or re-starting their work. This freedom of speech and of association, which at present the Churches alone possess, is potentially a great factor in the re-education of the people. It is of course impossible to generalize about the use which is being made of it. Some pastors have black records as informers and as supporters of the Nazis. It goes without saying that Nazi sympathisers will attempt

to use the freedom of the Churches as cover for subversive activities. All these are being rigorously dealt with, and must be, not only for the safety of our soldiers and the maintenance of order, but also to give other elements within the Churches a chance to grow.

At present preventive action against undesirables exceeds constructive support to those who might begin from within Germany the long process of re-education and regeneration. There are renegades: there are also pastors who for the first time for many years feel that they are free to speak their minds, and who turn to British chaplains for help in the use of their great opportunity. Long talks with some of these have revealed the depth of their spiritual experience, won through suffering and in isolation. Nor is what they have to say to their people entirely unheeded, for while a correspondent of the *National News Letter* saw half a congregation leave on an unfriendly reference to the Nazis from the pulpit, a friend of ours watched a congregation in a crowded cathedral stand in silence while the preacher said that Germany stood before God with nothing but her sin.

If we are to discover in Germany the few who in the "war within the war" were with us for freedom and against tyranny, several things need to be done.

First, there must be an attempt to seek out and use the help of those who were old and trusted friends of the œcumenical movement, known to many in this country through years of work in the World Student Christian Federation, the Faith and Order and the Life and Work movements. Many are known to have been implicated in the attempt to overthrow Hitler last July, and some have perished. Those who are left of these long-tried associates know their Churches and we need their help. In the French zone such contacts have already been made, and in the American zone two members of the staff of the World Council of Churches are on a journey of reconnoitre.

Second, we need an authoritative picture from an observer possessing knowledge and judgment who has been given the facilities to make a true estimate of the church situation and can deliver us from the inevitably scrappy and conflicting evidence of large numbers of individuals.

Lastly, the chaplains in our armies, who carry a very heavy responsibility, need to be given a policy to guide them and expert advice in carrying it out.

JACQUES MONOD

A letter published in a recent number of the *Student Movement* is one of the most impressive documents which have come out of the darkness of Europe in these last years—full of the hope which maketh not ashamed and which enables men to rejoice even in

tribulation. It was written by Jacques Monod in the summer of 1944 as he left his family of six children to join the Maquis in an expedition from which he did not return. We reproduce the letter for the benefit of those of our readers who have not seen it.

"At this moment of leave-taking I ask your pardon for having so poorly lived up to the confidence which you have put in me . . . Our fellowship is not broken, for we have sealed it at Holy Communion. At the moment when the walls of silence become ever thicker and isolate us one from another, we know that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, and that this love surrounds us always until the end of time, and binds us together in one Church, which is both visible and invisible.

"I pray God to grant each one of you the peace of His pardon and the power of His faith, at this hour when our hearts are heavy with the weight of our own sins and the sins of the world; at this hour when we are weary of suffering and of seeing others suffer, and when we sometimes fear death and seeing those we love die. I ask God, too, that He now forgive me my sins, and the decision which I voluntarily take this day (for I know that recourse to violence has need of pardon). But I am leaving without hate and fully convinced that we Christians have not the right to leave it to non-Christians alone to offer their lives in the name of a mere political ideal, in a struggle in which the fate of the community and that of the church and the spiritual destiny of our children are at stake.

"Remain united, remain within the Church. May your theological or intellectual differences never separate you from to-morrow's essential task, which will be the reconstruction of souls, namely the preaching of the gospel to them, not because of a sense of social duty, but rather because of joy and gratitude to our Father who has loved us so much. In the midst of a world which is going to be a hard one, hold jealously those human and Christian treasures which have given our friendship its meaning—I mean, the worship of Truth carried out in liberty and love. And finally, hold dear this life, the life of the earth and all its earthly labours, but in God and for God.

"I praise God for all the blessings He has given me through you, my friends, through my family, through our fellowship and through the Church. Let us bless and praise Him together for having transfigured both life and death through the pardon which He gives us in the name of His Son, the Saviour of the world."

CHARLES WILLIAMS

The death of Charles Williams a few weeks ago came as a peculiarly bitter blow to the widening circle of those who knew him and his work. He was in the strictest sense irreplaceable, for

he possessed a quite unique quality of mind and imagination. His death at a comparatively early age means that the experience of the rest of us will be the poorer for not having seen things about the human heart and the world about us which only he could have noticed. A great task awaits us of working out the implications of all that he said to us out of the rich variety of his work.

The Edinburgh House Press has just published a play of his, *The House of the Octopus*.[1] This is probably his last published work and is in many ways not unworthy of the position. The theme is that of the invasion of an island by a godless foreign power and the reaction of the infant Church to it. Mr. Williams uses language and place names from his own poetic mythology, but the reference to Japanese invasion of a South Sea island is unmistakeable. The invader tries to destroy the Church not by persecution, but by corruption. This gives Mr. Williams an opportunity to display his psychological insight and his vivid awareness of the subtlety of the wiles of the evil one, as well as to illuminate some important truths about the relation of the missionary to the Church he has founded. It is an exciting and profound play, and yet by no means beyond the capacity of a fairly good church dramatic society. We hope it will be widely performed in churches and that it will direct attention to some of Mr. Williams' other plays, more especially *Seed of Adam* and *Thomas Cranmer of Canterbury*.

The Plays Group of the United Council for Missionary Education is to be congratulated upon using in the services of the Church one of the many brilliant writers now to be found in her midst.

THE SUPPLEMENT

Dr. Lampert's Supplement, on a subject of peculiar concern to the News-Letter, has a direct and urgent topical interest. We imagine that it will not be very reassuring to most of our readers trained in a western tradition. Two traditions which have lived apart for so long are not likely to flow together without effort and misunderstanding. In nothing are they more radically divided than in their attitude to the State. The fact, however, that Russia and Britain are being thrown together to try to discover a common solution for the political problems of central Europe demands, as does our common membership of Christ, that we make a determined effort to understand as sympathetically as possible what the Orthodox teaching about the State is.

Yours sincerely,

Kathleen Bliss

[1] Edinburgh House Press, 5s.

ORTHODOXY AND THE SECULAR

DEAR DR. OLDHAM,

In view of some of the recent discussions in the Christian News-Letter on the attitude of the various Christian traditions to the "secular order," and questions of Church and State, and Church and Nation, I should like to make a few comments from the Eastern Orthodox point of view. It is almost a commonplace to say that these questions have become some of the most acute issues in modern society; and since the Eastern view of them diverges in some respects from those held in the West, a presentation of it may be of value to readers of the C.N-L.

THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE

It would perhaps be fitting to begin with a few remarks on the historical background. With the beginning of the fourth century a new epoch commences in the life of the East: the world and the Empire accept baptism in the person of Constantine or the "Apostolic Caesar," as he is called in Orthodox liturgical texts. The Church leaves its forced seclusion and receives the seeking ancient world under her sacred vaults. Naturally, this world brings with it its fears and conflicts, its doubts and its temptations. Nevertheless the whole inner life of the Hellenic body politic undergoes a real transformation, and the process resolves itself in the birth of the new Christian Byzantine culture. Even if this does not actually come about in the time of Constantine, it certainly begins with Theodosius (379–395), and reaches its climax in the time of Justinian (518–527). The new culture was a great synthesis in which all the creative traditions and aspirations of the past and present became merged together and transfigured. Monasticism, incidentally, played a vital and integral part in the whole enterprise. The main characteristic of this new civilization lies in that henceforth it was quite impossible to maintain (as it was maintained later on, and, I think, with disastrous effects, in the West) that duplication: two systems of law, two visible orders of society, conceived in more or less watertight compartments as temporal and spiritual power, Church and world, Church and State, Church and nation, and so on. There was in this Empire very little temporal legislation, and the real distinction was not between two societies, but rather between the spiritual and temporal function within a single Christian body (hence the *Nomo-Canon*). Henceforth man would either share in the building up of a Christian civilization, or become an apostate. No middle way was possible. In this pattern the Church was any-

thing but a world-denying factor : on the contrary. The magnificent temple of Holy Wisdom, the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, summarizes this epoch of intense Christian creativity and stands out as a living symbol of transfigured human life and civilization. Hagia Sophia has become the legacy of Byzantium to the whole Christian East, written in the hieroglyphics of church architecture. Indeed, this vision of the transfigured world symbolized in Hagia Sophia belongs not only to Byzantium : it is equally characteristic of pre-Petrine Russia of the Moscow Tsardom (and to some extent even of post-Petrine imperial Russia), as well as of the other European Orthodox countries (though there the situation was more complex owing to the centuries-long Turkish domination and a persistent struggle for freedom from foreign tyranny).

Undoubtedly Eastern monasticism (or for that matter Western monasticism) stood for renunciation—the renunciation of social status, property, family and earthly fatherhood, in short, for a kind of maximalism sustained by an awareness of the end of history. Monasticism itself was a form of exodus from the world. Such, however, is the paradoxical law of all authentic Christian life, it spells both renunciation and acceptance of the world. Through the ascetic trial the vision and valuation of the world are made anew. According to the teaching of the Orthodox Church the very essence of asceticism expels indifference to, and disappointment in, the world which in all its troubled destiny bears the seal of divine creative Wisdom. True asceticism is in fact inspired by the task of transfiguring and re-instating all things in Christ.

THE WESTERN TRADITION

At the risk of simplifying the issues, one may distinguish three typical ways of approaching the problem of the " two orders," which are prevalent in the Christian tradition of the West, and these have their typical inherent dangers. First, the Roman Catholic view (or, I should say perhaps, the view inherited from the Middle Ages), which is a system of hierarchically subordinated spheres. Each one of them embraces its own self-contained world, which is at the same time subordinated to the sphere above it. There is thus a " natural " and a " super-natural " order, and there is analogy between the movements in the material life of society and the activities on the peaks of the life of the spirit. The " natural " world, belonging to a lower stage, is acknowledged and justified in its relative independence ; yet above it stands, as it were, the theological censor who may taboo everything, though his authority is less tangible now than it used to be. It might be legitimately asserted that, whatever the advantages of such a system, its inherent possibilities of mastering the world, and its imprint on the sublime creations of the Middle Ages, it was able only to

control and not to redeem or integrate the secular order. It has, therefore, evoked the reaction of the Renaissance with its assertion of complete autonomy for human activity, and it has brought forth the heresy of clericalism, an incessant pursuit of the exclusive ascendancy of ecclesiastical rule over the world most evidenced not when this rule is actually being exercised, but only just beginning to make itself felt or is on its decline. This system is in fact to some extent responsible for modern secularization.

The second view is that of Lutheranism, where we see a juxtaposition or co-ordination of the two orders which is expressed in the teaching of the " self-legitimacy " (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) of the world and the world's pathways and the " inwardness " (*Inwendigkeit*) of the Gospel (the latter being interpreted in more recent times on purely eschatological lines). The danger of this position resides in that it leads to a state of things in which the relation between the order of Grace and the order of nature is conceived in terms of mere mutual adaptation—a kind of compromise and opportunism, of which there is evidence in the relations of Church and State in some Protestant countries. Calvinism, on the other hand—and this is the third approach—in striving to avoid the Lutheran compromise with the world, stands for the principle that in a fallen world all true authority belongs to the " elect," and that therefore the Church must seek not only to be other than and independent of the world order, but even to control it where she has the power. This leads to a kind of clericalism on Protestant soil, which has, moreover, encouraged an extremely rigid and exacting legalism against which Luther had waged such a bitter and righteous struggle. But both views engender secularist tendencies, or are, perhaps, already a result of incipient secularization.[1]

INORDINATION

If the Roman Catholic tendency is one of *sub-ordination*, and the Protestant (Lutheran) one of *co-ordination*, the Orthodox may be described as one of *in-ordination*: its main characteristic is the refusal to conceive of two disparate, extrinsically (or even only hierarchically) correlated orders, but assumes, as it were, a single divine-human reality. Its distinctive element is the belief that as God enters into human reality He transforms it in virtue of its intrinsic affinity with divine life. The Orthodox claims that the

[1] This is not to deny that the Reformation in general was defending truly Christian values, that it issued from a profound awareness of the liberty of man and as such permanently influenced the life of Western democracies, such as English democracy, whose origin is the proclamation of the liberty of conscience at the time of the English Reformation. Unfortunately this love of liberty was frequently expressed by people who had not the slightest interest in *Truth*. There was probably, as, I think, Konstantin Leontiev, a nineteen-century Russian publicist, remarked, more real liberty in the days when the fires of the Spanish Inquisition were blazing than in the middle-class democracies of to-day.

challenge of secularism can be met and full justice can be done to Christian truth and to the real tragedy of and the conflicts in man only by recognizing consistently God's intrinsic presence in the world order, in nature and in history. The natural order by its very creaturehood shares in God's acts of sanctification. There is continuity between God as the Creator and Preserver and God the Redeemer and Saviour, and hence no absolute contradiction between God and the world, even this fallen, stricken world of ours . . . The common tendency in the West of charging the Orthodox of Pelagianism (cf. one of the correspondents in a recent News-Letter) completely misses the point, and proves how people are apt to consider things in the narrow context of their own problems and thus blur the issue. Ironically enough, some have accused the Orthodox Church of Jansenism! Pelagianism is, in point of fact, a typically Western heresy of life and thought. It was the result of the incipient disintegration of the divine-human image of Christ in the consciousness of Western Christendom, whose final outcome is modern secular civilization, and it is quite alien to the whole outlook of the Christian East.

The result is that Orthodoxy goes, though on rather different premises, quite as far in its rehabilitation of the world and in its desire to enter into the actual reality of life as the Western forms of Christianity. Indeed we are apt to accept the world quite naïvely—as it is given to us, and not as we dream it to be—and ask ourselves about its relation to God. Any other attitude appears to us as tantamount to implicit atheism, or at least to be a heresy which denies God's lordship over history. God could not have redeemed the world if it were not His creation. Only because it *is* His possession can it *become* His possession. God desires to be known and honoured as Creator and Redeemer even in the simple acts and facts of human life : simple not only in the sense of plain, but also in the Biblical sense—He desires to be known even in the foolish acts and facts of man. He desires to be known even in the lawless, degenerate and confused ways of man. Not the moral world, nor any theoretical world is accepted, but simply the world as one finds it. It is all so commonplace, so lacking in illusion—like so much in the so-called backward Eastern countries, and indeed like all the actual life of man—but for that very reason pregnant with divine meaning. The happenings of the day, even those apparently most alienated from light, are conceived as issuing from an inner necessity, and providentially justified : the same understanding that distinguishes the novels of Dostoyevsky, with their glowing passion of solidarity in human shortcomings, from the kind in which, as in some of Tolstoy's, we feel ourselves constantly preached at. Only out of the keenest awareness of redemption and God's presence in history can one accept life as it is. And this is

not to commit oneself to what is mortal and godless in the world, but to the living and divine power which is ever-present, to that kingdom of heaven whose laws cast their shadow *and* their light upon the events and relations of the present age. This very commitment to God in the world gives the strength not to commit oneself to the world without God.

THE IDEA OF THE NATIONAL CHURCH

This attitude must be borne in mind for the understanding of the idea of the *national church*, which is probably nowhere so clearly realized as in Orthodox countries. The Orthodox churches form a great brotherhood of autonomous (national or "autocephalous") churches held together by the bond of a common faith, a common order (Canon Law) and liturgy. The statement has been advanced by critics of the Orthodox Church that it has never been able to preserve its free judgment and independence with regard to national life and to temporal affairs in general. But although the Orthodox churchman in fact did lift his voice against tyranny and injustice, and often risked and incurred the pain of martyrdom in so doing, in a sense he never claimed independent power. He spoke as Elisha who rebuked Ahab for rape of Naboth's vineyard, as a dutiful servant, impelled by conscience, speaks to an erring master, as one who shares in, and even identifies himself with, the noble and ignoble destinies of the people, not as one who exercises the temporal authority of a dominant Church. So far as the Russian Orthodox Church is concerned this is true, paradoxical though this may seem, even in face of the realities of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Russia, as I have tried to explain in a recent letter to you, reproduced in part in the C.N-L. No. 221 (cf. also your own admirable comment on the question in a subsequent number).

In the Orthodox conception of the National Church we find precisely the application of the belief that the Church is called upon to share in the vicissitudes of national life, that this is indeed a pre-requisite for the fulfilment of her prophetic function, and that the Church is for all rather than a society for a religious *élite*; for though the Church transcends all national limits and characteristics, its life operates in the concrete situations of men in their individual circumstances and in their nationality. This position has been, moreover, reinforced and accentuated, especially in the Balkan countries, by the fact that in the struggle against Mohammedan domination nationality and faith tended to become intertwined. The peculiar historical circumstances in the Christian East, however, were more than an accident, and they should be judged with reference to the whole Orthodox conception of the relation of the two orders, to the faith in the power of the Church to penetrate from within and sanctify the given realities of human existence.

THE DANGERS

We are all tempted to shut ourselves up ever more securely in the virtues, or perhaps in the deceptions and delusions, of our own way of looking at things. That is why the awareness of dangers which threaten human life at every stage and in all conditions is so important. What, then, are the dangers and the aberrations peculiar to the Orthodox East, and more particularly to Russia, whose problems are in a special sense bound up with the future of Europe? So far as the issues of the present letter are concerned, I do not think that the familiar charges of caesaro-papism, erastianism or nationalism really point to the characteristic dangers. The uniqueness of Russia resides in the fact—and this is in full accordance with the pre-suppositions outlined above—that she has never been able to accept humanist civilization, with its tendency to neutrality in religious matters and general secularism. She has always lived by the will to discover the ultimate object of life, to choose—God or the Devil. She has always believed that all the activities of human civilization and social life must needs become reduced to nothingness if they remain autonomous, that the impetus of independent secular activity must inevitably spend itself. But, as Berdyaev pointed out, secularism in Russia has expressed itself "in the fixed forms of 'homo-deism,' in such figures as Dostoyevsky's Kirillov, Shatov, Verkhovensky, Ivan Karamazov, and not at all in accordance with the humanist spirit of the West." She is more likely to give birth to Antichrist than to a humanistic democracy and a laicized neutral civilization. The only terms in which Russia can fitly be described are Hell and Heaven. No middle way is possible. It is hardly likely that agreement can be reached on the point as to whether this is a comforting and reassuring or, on the contrary, an extremely disquieting thought!

Yours very sincerely,

E. LAMPERT

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